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**Daniel Greenberg**

**Script for BBC Thought for the Day**

**17 July 2019**

**Uighar Detentions**

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Good morning.

Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights respects the rights of parents to have their children educated “in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions”.

This is counterintuitive. Human rights law emphasises that children are not chattels of their parents, but individuals with independent rights. Article 2 seems to recognise children’s right to inherit traditions from their parents; or parents’ rights to influence their children.

Whichever it is, the fragility of this right is presently being demonstrated on a possibly unprecedented scale.

In past weeks the media have reported new evidence of the internment of Uighar Muslims in the Xinjiang province of China. Children are apparently being sent in their thousands to massive civic boarding schools, designed to divest them of their language, religion, culture and fundamental identity.

This will disturb anyone who loves freedom: but it resonates particularly for Jews. The main memory of the Holocaust is the murder of millions of Jews, Gypsies, Poles, Slavs, homosexuals, Christians, communists, socialists and others. But alongside that, the image of children torn away from their parents’ arms burns its own searing image on our collective memory. For parents not knowing whether their children were dead, or being brought up orphaned from their religious and cultural heritage, perhaps even being re-educated in the viciousness and brutality of the Nazi regime, every minute of every day must have been a waking nightmare.

What is happening now in Xinjiang seems to me every bit as brutal.

This is not a matter of politics: every country is entitled to its own understanding of political morality and the rule of law. This is about humanity; and the recognition that obliteration of a person’s identity is almost as much an atrocity as their murder.

China is actively encouraging tourists to the natural beauties of Xinjiang, including the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Tianshan. We can register our horror by avoiding a place where vast areas are cordoned off for so-called “education centres” that are too secret to be shown freely to the world; and there are those who have opportunities to implore the Chinese Government to think again.

Jewish liturgy constantly refers to God as "avinu" – our father – and to us as children; the right of children to their parents’ love, and vice versa, is sacred and precious, and should be respected and protected, whether on religious or humanitarian grounds, by all.